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Mille Lac Indian Reservation.

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MILLE LAC INDIAN RESERVATION.

OCTOBER 30, 1893.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

MR. HALL, from the Committee on the Public Lands, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany H. Res. 31.]

The Committee on the Public Lands, to whom was referred the joint resolution (H. Res. 31) for the protection of those parties who have heretofore been allowed to make entries for lands within the former Mille Lac Indian Reservation in Minnesota, have had the same under consideration and report it back with the recommendation that it pass.

The Mille Lac Indian Reservation (owned by the Chippewas) was ceded to the United States in 1863 and had been declared open to entry by successive decisions of the Department of the Interior.

The most of the lands were entered prior to January 14, 1889. An act approved January 14, 1889 (25 Stat., 642), provided for the purchase from the Chippewas of all their reservations in Minnesota (except the Red Lake Reservation), and also for the sale of the lands, and the setting apart of the proceeds of such sales as a trust fund for the Indians. This act further provided for an examination of the lands, and their separation into "pine lands" and "agricultural lands." The "pine lands" were to be sold at auction at their appraised value, and not less than \$3 per acre, and the "agricultural lands" were subject to entry under the homestead law.

On January 9, 1891, the then Secretary of the Interior held that the Mille Lac Reservation, having been ceded in 1863, was not embraced in the reservations covered by the act of January 14, 1889, and, therefore, that the Mille Lac lands were subject to disposal as other public lands under the general law.

Under this ruling, and prior to May 3, 1892, there were made upon these lands 109 homestead entries, aggregating 13,628 acres, and 131 preëmptions, aggregating 17,991 acres, and 1 soldier's declaratory statement, covering 40 acres; in all, 31,659 acres.

Afterwards, on April 22, 1892, the Secretary of the Interior reversed his former ruling and held that the lands were not subject to disposition under the general land laws, but under the special provisions of the act of January 14, 1889. This decision was communicated to the local land offices on May 3, 1892.

The object of the pending bill is to confirm the entries of said lands, made in good faith under the ruling of January 9, 1891, and between that date and the time when said ruling was reversed and the local land officers notified thereof. The occupants of these lands made their entries and paid their money under the general land laws and in

accordance with the ruling of the Secretary of the Interior. The subsequent reversal of that ruling by the same Secretary ought not to deprive them of their equitable right to these lands.

The present bill was approved by the late Secretary of the Interior, passed the Senate, and was favorably reported to the House in the last Congress. It also meets the approval of the present Secretary of the Interior and of the Commissioner of the General Land Office.

